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# Alice Pearce

**Alice Pearce** (October 16, 1917 – March 3, 1966) was an American actress. She was brought to Hollywood by Gene Kelly to reprise her Broadway performance in the film version of *On the Town* (1949). Pearce played comedic supporting roles in several films before being cast as nosy neighbor Gladys Kravitz in the television sitcom *Bewitched* in 1964. She won the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series posthumously after the second season of the series. She died from ovarian cancer in 1966.

## Early life and career

Pearce was born in New York City, the only child of Margaret Clark and Robert E. Pearce.[1] Her father was a foreign banking specialist, and her family moved to Europe when she was 18 months old.[2] They lived in Brussels, Antwerp, Rome, and Paris.[3] At age nine, she fell off a swing after losing her grip and landed on her chin. This left her with an undeveloped chin. She returned to the United States as a teenager and boarded at the Masters School in Dobbs Ferry, New York.[4] She graduated from Sarah Lawrence College in 1940 with a degree in drama.[1][5]

She began working in nightclubs as a comedienne and was cast in the original Broadway production of *On the Town* (1944–1946). Gene Kelly was so impressed by her that she became the only cast member to be included in the film version in 1949.[2][6] Her comedic performance was well received by critics and public alike. She was given her own television variety show, *The Alice Pearce Show*.[7] More movie roles followed, and she made appearances on Broadway where she met her husband, director Paul Davis, during a production of *Bells Are Ringing*.[2]

During the 1953–1954 television season, Pearce was seen regularly on ABC's *Jamie*, which starred Brandon deWilde.[7] In 1964, Pearce was originally approached to play the part of Grandmama in the ABC television comedy series *The Addams Family*. She turned down the part, which went to veteran actress Blossom Rock. Later that year, Pearce joined the cast of *Bewitched* as the nagging and nosy neighbor Gladys Kravitz. Pearce's scenes were almost entirely reactions to the witchcraft she had witnessed

**Alice Pearce**

As Gladys Kravitz in a 1966 publicity still for the *Bewitched* episode "Samantha, the Dressmaker"

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|---|---|
| **Born** | October 16, 1917<br>New York City, U.S. |
| **Died** | March 3, 1966<br>(aged 48)<br>Hollywood, California, U.S. |
| **Alma mater** | Sarah Lawrence College |
| **Occupation** | Actress |
| **Years active** | 1943–1966 |
| **Spouses** | John Rox<br>(m. 1948; died 1957)<br>Paul Davis (m. 1964) |
| **Awards** | Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series |

at the house across the street. Her hysterical accusations against Samantha, played by Elizabeth Montgomery, and the disbelief of her husband Abner (George Tobias) provided a common thread through many of the series' early episodes. She played the role until her death in 1966 and was replaced by Sandra Gould.[8] Pearce was posthumously awarded an Emmy Award for this role. Her husband accepted the award on her behalf.[9]

## Personal life

Pearce was married twice. Her 1948 marriage to composer John Rox lasted until his death in 1957.[4] In 1964, she married stage manager Paul Davis, with whom she remained until her death.[3]

## Death

Pearce was diagnosed with terminal cancer before *Bewitched* began. She kept her illness a secret,[10] although her rapid weight loss was quite evident during the second season of the sitcom. She died from ovarian cancer toward the end of the second year of *Bewitched* at the age of 48. The last episode Pearce appeared in was titled "Prodigy." It was completed many months before Pearce died, but it aired after her death as the last episode of Season 2. Pearce was cremated and her ashes were scattered at sea.[11]

# Filmography

| Year | Title | Role | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1949 | *On the Town* | Lucy Schmeeler | |
| | *The Alice Pearce Show* | Host | Unknown episodes |
| 1951 | *Lux Video Theatre* | Nina | Season 2 Episode 14: "Dames Are Poison" |
| 1952 | *The Belle of New York* | Elsie Wilkins | |
| 1953 | *The Motorola Television Hour* | Hagga | Season 1 Episode 5: "The Thirteen Clocks" |
| | *Broadway Television Theater* | Miss Dale Ogden<br>Lady Emily Lyons | Episode: *The Bat* by Mary Roberts Rinehart and Avery Hopwood<br>Episode: *The Bishop Misbehaves* by Frederick J. Jackson |
| 1953–1954 | *Jamie* | Annie Moakum | 6 episodes |
| | *Take It from Me* | Neighbor | Also known as *The Jean Carroll Show*[12] |
| 1955 | *How to Be Very, Very Popular* | Miss "Syl" Sylvester | |
| | *Alice in Wonderland* | Dormouse | TV movie |
| 1956 | *The Opposite Sex* | Olga | |
| 1959 | *The Real McCoys* | Emmy | Season 3 Episode 4: "Work No More, My Lady" |
| 1961 | *The Twilight Zone* | Mrs. Nielsen | Season 2 Episode 20: "Static" |
| | *The Ann Sothern Show* | Ethel | Season 3 Episode 14: "Operation Pudney" |
| | *The Ann Sothern Show* | Lahona St. Cyr | Season 3 Episode 25: "The Beginning" |
| 1962 | *Lad: A Dog* | Hilda, the Nurse | |
| | *Dennis the Menace* | Lucy Tarbell[7] | Season 4 Episode 2: "You Go Your Way" |
| | *Dennis the Menace* | Lucy Tarbell[7] | Season 4 Episode 12: "Jane Butterfield Says" |
| 1963 | *My Six Loves* | Bus Driver | |
| | *Tammy and the Doctor* | Millie Baxter, Nurse | |
| | *The Thrill of It All* | Irving's wife | |
| | *The Donna Reed Show* | Adele Collins | Season 6 Episode 12: "A Touch of Glamour" |
| | *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour* | Haila French | Season 2 Episode 10: "Good-Bye, George" |
| 1964 | *Hazel* | Miss Elsie | Season 3 Episode 17: "Hot Potato a la Hazel" |

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|---|---|---|---|
| | *Dear Heart* | Miss Moore | |
| | *The Disorderly Orderly* | Mrs. Fuzzibee, Talkative Patient | |
| | *Kiss Me, Stupid* | Mrs. Mulligan | |
| 1964–1966 | *Bewitched* | Gladys Kravitz | 27 episodes |
| 1965 | *Dear Brigitte* | Unemployment Office Clerk | |
| | *Bus Riley's Back in Town* | Woman Customer / Housewife | |
| 1966 | *The Glass Bottom Boat* | Mabel Fenimore | Alternative title: *The Spy in Lace Panties* |
| 1967 | *Vacation Playhouse* | Music Teacher | Season 5 Episode 2: "My Boy Googie" Aired posthumously (final appearance) |

# Awards

| Year | Award | Category | Title of work | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1966 | Emmy Award | Outstanding Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in a Comedy | *Bewitched* | Won |
| 2003 | TV Land Awards | Nosiest Neighbor | | |

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## External links

**Biography portal**

- Alice Pearce (https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-cast-staff/55785) at the Internet Broadway Database
- Alice Pearce (https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/person/149266%7C10967/wp) at the TCM Movie Database
- Alice Pearce (https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0668879/) at IMDb

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